

# DETROIT URBAN LEAGUE, INC.

BUILDING FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

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February 1, 1973

Mr. Elliott Hall, President  
NAACP  
2990 East Grand Boulevard  
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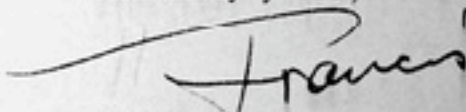
Dear Elliott:

While the continuance of STRESS is causing a lot of concern in the community, the Detroit Urban League has taken a position on two different occasions about STRESS. What came out of the latest conference on STRESS, as reported in the press, was no different from what our position has always been and perhaps somewhat weaker. We feel that the entire matter of alleged anti-black practices must be objectively investigated where only facts will determine the merit of the decision as to the future direction or discontinuation of STRESS programs.

We know of groups who support STRESS but are afraid of standing up and speaking out against the abolition of STRESS because of business and personal reprisals. A well known person stated yesterday via telephone that he would interject that 80% of the black community would support the continuance of STRESS under proper guidelines. This, of course, I cannot validate because we have not seen an objective study of the black community with respect to this issue. Too often the good remain silent.

I am adding two releases: One dated October 3, 1971 and the other dated March 17, 1972. In addition to this, I have been before radio and television in order to express our position which we feel is sound and free of emotionalism. This is our position. Use it for what it's worth.

Sincerely yours,

  
FRANCIS A. KORNEGAY  
Executive Director

FAK:tb

Enclosures

cc: Mr. William H. Penn, Sr.



January 11, 1973

TO: Francis A. Kornegay  
Executive Director

Winston E. Lang  
Deputy Director

FROM: LaNita R. Haith  
Director of Information & Interpretation

RE: DUL Position on STRESS

In light of the recent controversy of the police unit STRESS and the events which took place at the Common Council hearing today on STRESS, I feel the DUL should again take a position publicly on this issue. Before taking such a position, however, I think recent incidents should be considered that that should lead us to seriously reevaluate our previous statements.

On October 3, 1971 at the beginning of the STRESS controversy we issued a statement which urged the police to inform the community of who is assigned to the force, what his special qualifications must be and what special instructions he is given when he joins STRESS, as well as when he is told to use force, what kind and to what degree. We urged that a study come forward answering these questions while the force continued to operate.

On March 17, 1972 we urged Mayor Gribbs to enforce controls on STRESS and develop additional guidelines for STRESS or abolish the unit. We took this position because of the frequent killings by STRESS officers and the failure of the unit to effectively protect the rights of citizens including suspects. We have also consistently urged citizens to cooperate fully with the police. At this time they had still failed to adequately answer the questions of the community. To date the organizational structure of the STRESS unit that we asked to be revealed on October 3 has still not been disclosed to the community. Information regarding STRESS is so evasive that citizens at the hearing today that have attempted to make complaints have been unable to successfully do so.

More than 23 complaints have been filed with the Common Council regarding abusive attacks on citizens by STRESS officers. These include "respectable" citizens, a minister, teacher, a senior citizen, and persons who had completely cooperated in previous police investigations.

The community has become outraged at these incidents that include infringement of many individual rights and a rage of terrorism being conducted in the black community. These actions warranted 2,000 people to attend the Common

Council hearing, and 30,000 citizens to sign a petition demanding the immediate abolishment of STRESS.

STRESS has not measured up to the standards the DUL insisted were important for its continuation. It has not been a community protection unit even though it has been given more than ample time and reasonable opportunities to do so. We have supported a cooperative and trusting effort between the police department and the community to combat crime but STRESS has violated this trust. Because of these developments and the neglect of our previous statements calling for reform of STRESS, I feel we can no longer support this police unit or ask the community to do so. I would suggest that we take a position urging the immediate abolishment of the STRESS police unit.

DRAFT  
2-19-73

John my Committee  
Statement on Current  
Police Issues  
JHK

Document begins

2/23/73

We speak as interested and very concerned citizens to the currently serious problem of relationships in Detroit between the Police Department and the community it serves.

While our views are expressed as those of individuals, most of us are organizationally active and have some perception of sentiments and attitudes in wider circles. All of us, in endorsing this statement, share the common goal of restoring a sense of balance and perspective to our public discussion of this troubling problem.

In point of historical fact, our observations will add nothing new to the dimensions of this discussion. To a large measure, we are reiterating that which has been said before in various reports, comments, analyses and editorial opinions. It is appropriate at this time, however, to give our views public expression, because many who would otherwise speak in similar terms feel themselves intimidated or their voices unheard among the strident tones of those representing the extremes of the issue.

There is, therefore, another voice yet to be heard. We believe it to be the voice of the overwhelming number of residents of the Detroit area who want nothing more than to enjoy peaceful neighborhoods, safe streets, and the opportunity to raise their families in a secure environment. It is self evident that this will not be achieved by the demagogery of the extremists or by the posturing of opportunists; nor will it be achieved by a systematic dismantling of the Police Department; nor by the mindless response of individual officers to admittedly difficult situations.

The time is perhaps once more upon us to repeat that which is elementary. It may be regarded as axiomatic that effective police work has its roots in effective cooperation with the community. When police and citizens meet, participate, understand, and become real partners, it is the community, and the safety of its people, that will be the winner.

We are persuaded that in individual instances, members of the Detroit Police Department have been guilty of excessive conduct, of abuse, intimidation, harassment and invasion of privacy. We are similarly persuaded that the role of the peace officer is made vastly more difficult by all too prevalent attitudes of suspicion, mistrust, contempt and by refusal to cooperate. Regrettably, each of these sets of attitudes and patterns of behavior is complementary, one to the other. Each feeds upon the other. Unchecked and uncontrolled, they will inevitably lead us to confrontation rather than to resolution.

The shouting, the criticisms and counter criticisms, the demands and the refutations, do not substitute for the hard thinking and the harder work involved in the cementing of police-community relations. We pledge our own efforts, and whatever influence we have among our respective groups, to the engendering of the respect properly due those who enforce the laws which protect us all, and to the police calling as a profession. We see the home, the school, our congregations of worship, our organizations, as among those institutions which must take this responsibility seriously.

We urge upon the police that which is so desperately wanted by so many: vigorous, speedy, honest and color blind law enforcement. The assurance must be firm that citizen complaints will be handled within a procedure that is clearly understood by and has the confidence of the public; that complaints will be investigated thoroughly, and acted upon immediately with accurate public disclosure. Non-police personnel, drawn from institutional and individual sources, and available on an around the clock basis, may be useful in certain crisis intervention situations. We suggest the employment of this resource as a routine of regular police practice.

Our statement is made in full confidence that the administration of this city, and the leaders of our Police Department, desire and will strive for nothing less than a highly professional service to the people of Detroit. Given this quality of service, given this degree of competence, there can be no question of citizen support, financial and otherwise, of the police of our city.

The process we visualize and the task ahead of us are not unilateral ones. Neither can be successful with only the Police Department or only the community taking action. They must be authentically cooperative. It is to this objective that we must address ourselves. The value at stake could very well be that of the harmony and unity of our city; the alternative could be an unbearable one.

As concerned citizens, we offer every assistance possible to us to bring together those who are aggrieved with those in authority who can act upon their grievances. It is only through the effort to achieve greater understanding that we may hope to achieve the greater stability of our city.